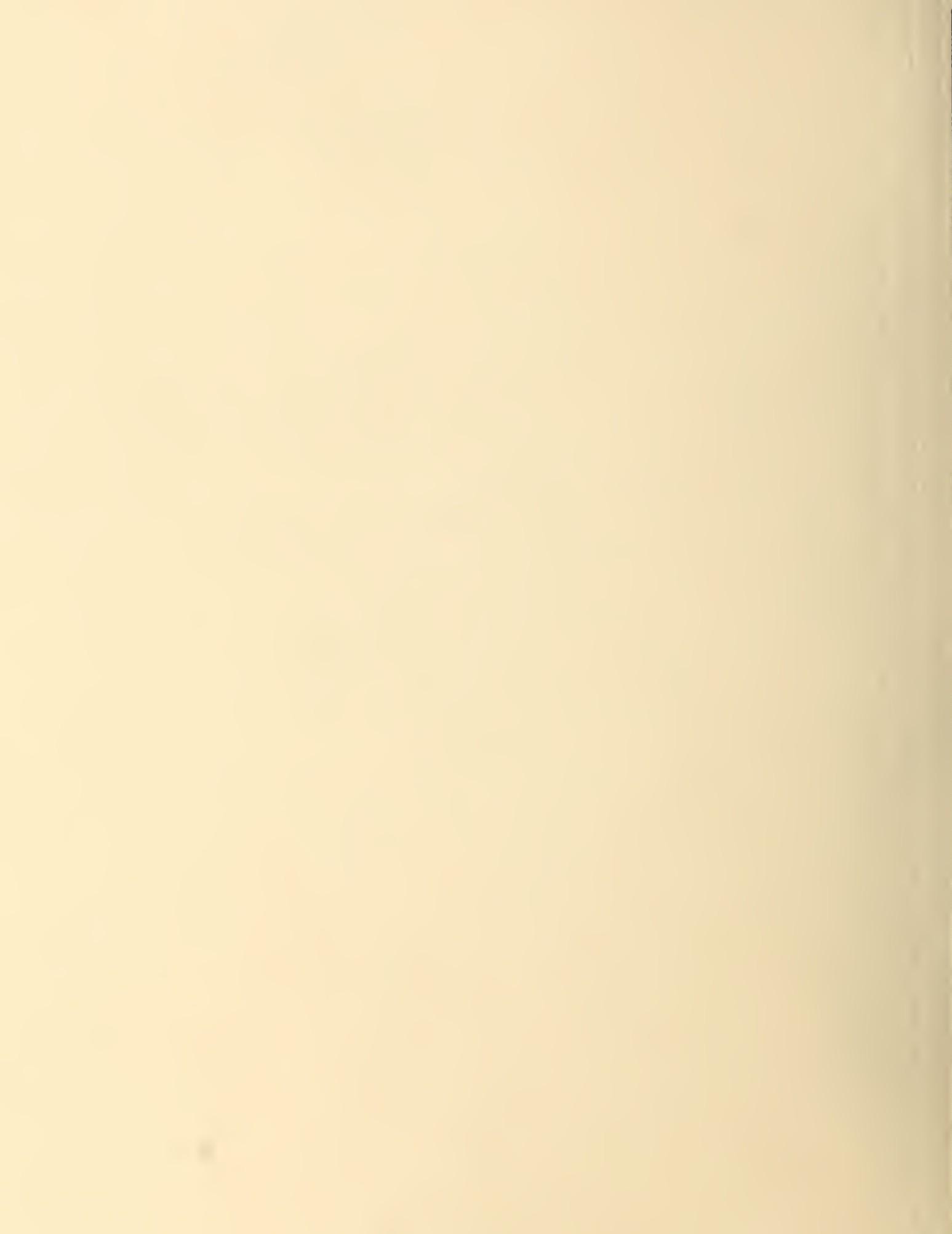


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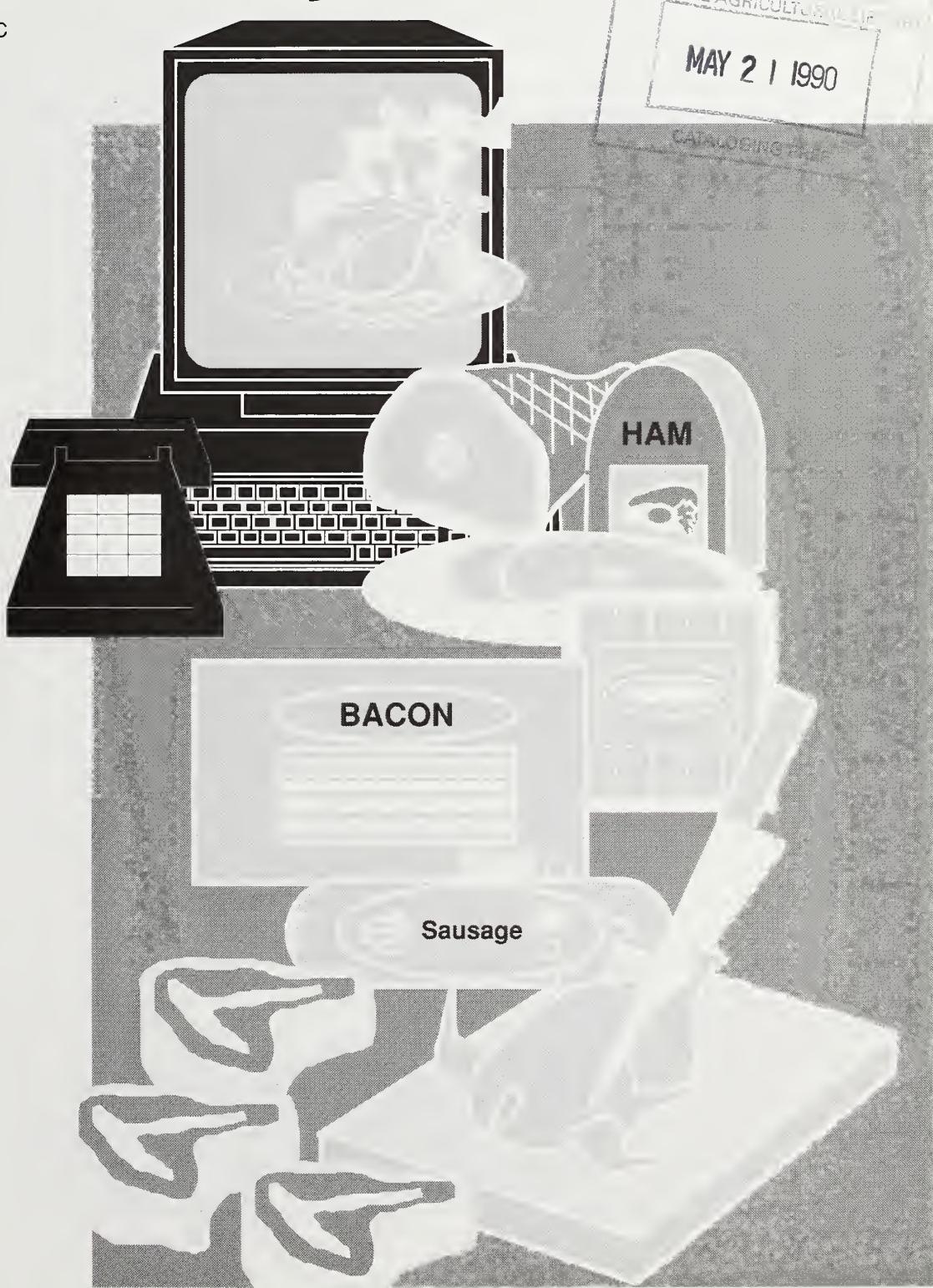
Food Safety  
and Inspection  
Service

Meat and  
Poultry  
Hotline  
Staff

Washington, D C  
20250

April 1989

# Food Safety Education through the Meat and Poultry Hotline





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## ***Food Safety Education through the Meat and Poultry Hotline***

### ***Summary***

The Meat and Poultry Hotline continues to address the food safety concerns of consumers on an individualized basis. One-to-one contact, a hallmark of the hotline's operation since its inception, has been maintained while the scope of hotline service has been greatly expanded. The ongoing need for basic food safety advice was evident throughout the year.

During FY 88, approximately 51,500 consumers called the hotline. This is an increase of 3,000 calls (6 percent) over FY 87. Presently, limitations on space, equipment, and staffing continue to influence the rate at which call volume increases. While the dramatic 75-percent increase in call volume between FY 86 and FY 87 has not been repeated, the hotline continues to expand. The number of callers served yearly continues to rise steadily.

Of these 51,500 calls, 56 percent (approximately 28,900) were received during regular business hours. (The Meat and Poultry Hotline operates from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern time, except during November when hours are expanded.) Home economists spoke with 87 percent of the callers; 13 percent of the callers who reached the hotline (3,900) hung up before speaking with a home economist. On average, these callers held for 1 minute and 22 seconds before abandoning their calls; presumably many were able to reach the hotline on a subsequent attempt. Those who called after hours heard a recorded food safety message and were encouraged to call back during business hours.

An additional 39,600 calls to the hotline were not completed because all lines were busy. Consideration will be given to adding more telephone lines.

Unless otherwise stated, the totals and percentages in this report are based on records of conversations with the 25,000 callers who spoke with staff home economists during regular hours of operation.

Historically, 60 to 70 percent of hotline inquiries have been related to basic food safety, i.e., methods of handling, preparing, and storing foods that reduce the risk of food-borne illness. Within these categories, areas of particular interest emerged. In FY 88, callers continued to express concern about salmonella (see page 3 ).

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) tested a food safety hotline in three States from June 1 through August 31. The objective of the project was to determine whether a nationwide tollfree hotline could effectively be used to educate consumers about safe handling of foods including, but not limited to, meat and poultry products. Types of inquiries received by the pilot were similar to those received by the Meat and Poultry Hotline (see page 3 ).

### ***Types of Inquiries***

#### ***The Typical Meat and Poultry Hotline Call***

The typical Meat and Poultry Hotline call continued to be a request for information (97 percent). Consumers wondered how long a given meat or poultry item could be safely stored, how to minimize the risk of illness from consuming raw or lightly cooked eggs, or how to judge the doneness of the turkey roasting in the oven. The overwhelming majority (98 percent) of all calls were answered immediately by the hotline staff; 2 percent required further research.



Patricia Moriarty, Marianne Gravely, Marilyn Mower

Complaints related to FSIS-regulated products accounted for 3 percent of all inquiries. One percent of inquiries were formal complaints and were referred to the FSIS Meat-Borne Hazard Control Center or to FSIS' Compliance Division for followup. The number of formal complaints (163) was nearly identical to last year's figure. Nearly half of the formal complaints (49 percent) concerned foreign objects, appearance, smell, or taste of the product. One-quarter of the complainants alleged illness or injury as a result of consuming the item in question.

The hotline also functions as a conduit of information on product recalls. Consumers can receive confirmation of the exact brand names and lot numbers being recalled by manufacturers. Last year the hotline received nearly 100 recall inquiries; a December 1987 recall of salami and prosciutto prompted two-thirds of those questions.

### Calls Received by Month

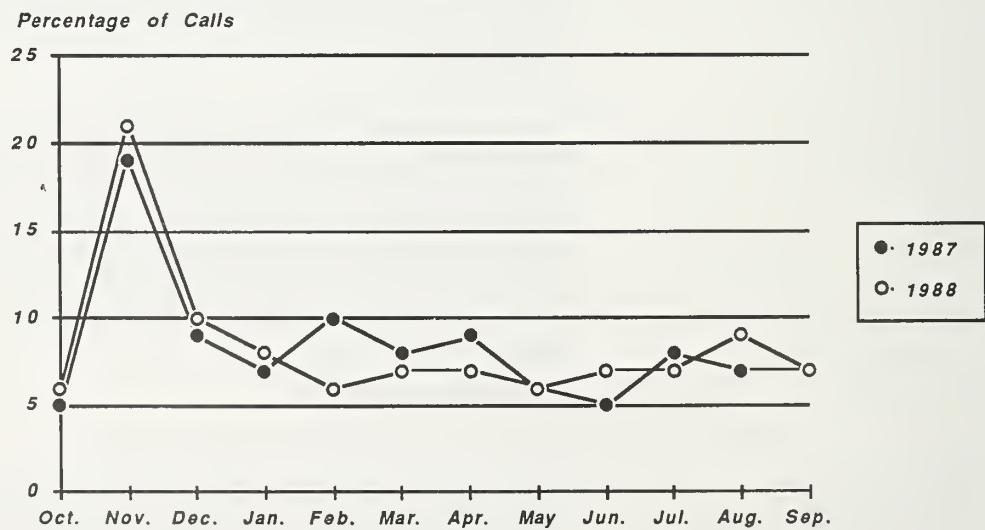
Calls were again well distributed throughout the year, with the exception of the predicted influx during the November/December holiday season (Fig. 1). Twenty-one percent of the year's total of incoming calls were received in November 1987. To accommodate the increased demand for service prior to Thanksgiving, the hotline was open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time, November 2-27. Consumers took advantage of the additional opportunity to ask questions; 4 percent of the year's incoming calls (1,100) were recorded during these 2 extra hours per day.



Gertie Hurley, Jane Reinsel,  
Marilyn Johnston, CiCi Williamson

Figure 1

### Calls Received by Month



## **Caller Profile**

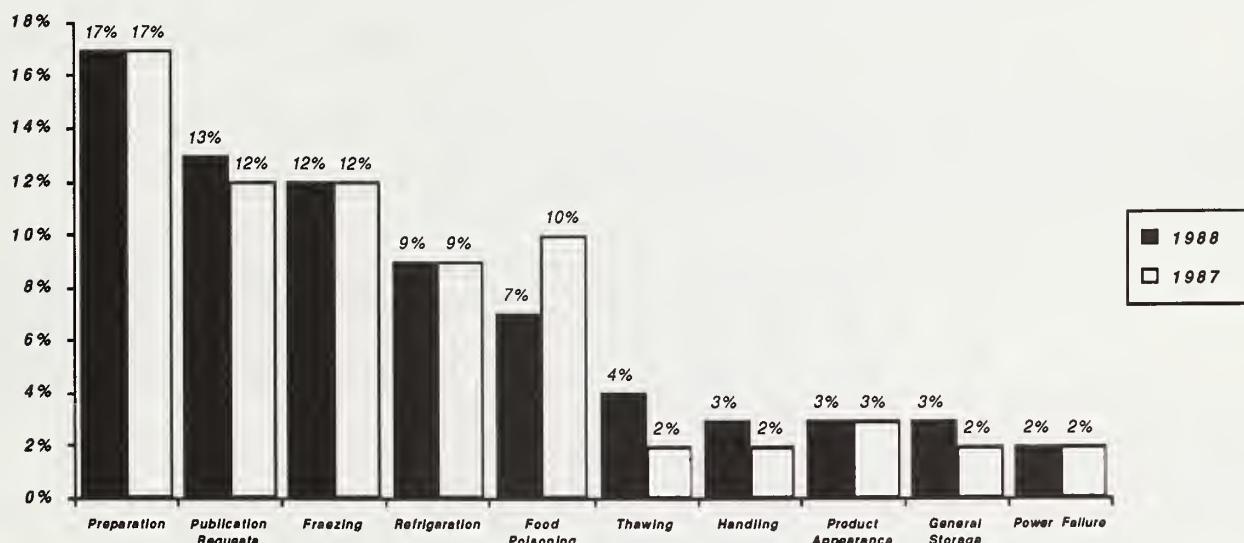
Consumers accounted for 86 percent of inquiries (19,600) and continued to be the principal users of the Meat and Poultry Hotline. The second largest user group was again business persons; the portion of calls attributed to this group rose from 4 to 5 percent in FY 88. Government officials, media representatives, and professionals each accounted for 2 percent of the total number of calls.

## **Subject of Inquiry**

In FY 88, 73 percent of hotline inquiries were related to basic safe handling, preparation, and storage of foods. Indeed, a list of the top 10 subjects of inquiry for the year reflects these basic subject areas, plus product appearance (Fig. 2).

**Figure 2**

**FY 88 Top Ten Subjects of Inquiry**



## **Salmonella**

In the 3 1/2 years of the hotline's existence as a tollfree service, media attention has generated interest in food-borne bacterial illness, particularly salmonellosis. Salmonella inquiries rose from 3 percent of the FY 86 total to 10 percent of the FY 87 total. The volume of salmonella calls peaked in mid-1987. In FY 88, 5 percent of callers asked specifically about salmonella bacteria. Most asked about the potential of the bacteria to cause illness; others were interested in Agency programs designed to control salmonella contamination. Many callers placing publication orders asked for materials related to salmonella.

Of the species-specific salmonella inquiries, 84 percent were associated with two products, eggs and chicken. From April through October, eggs were the predominant focus of concern following the publication of a Centers for Disease Control study implicating grade A eggs in a number of food poisoning outbreaks in recent years (Fig. 3). In FY 87, again due to widespread media coverage, the majority of salmonella inquiries pertained to chicken.

Figure 3

### Questions About *Salmonella* and Food-borne Illness

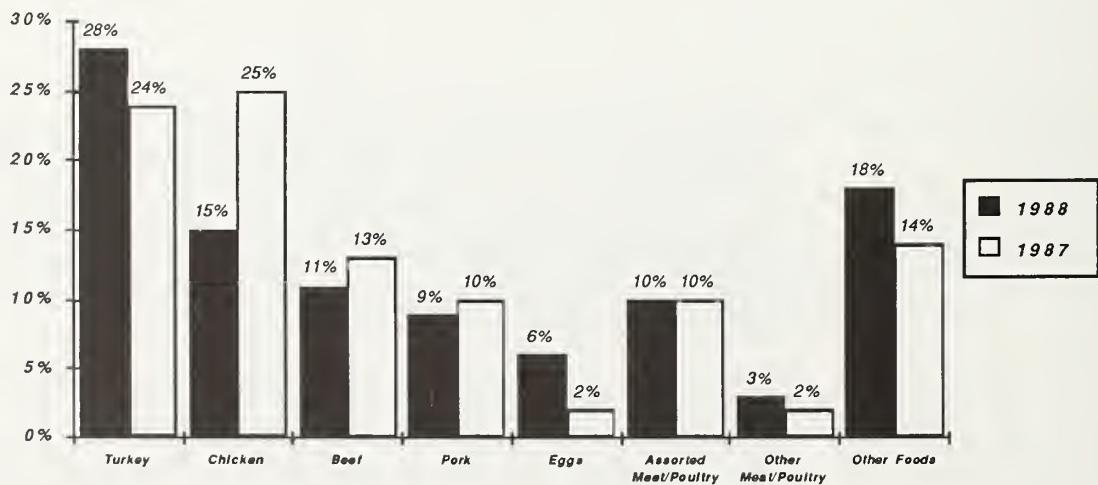


### Inquiries by Species

Turkey, the subject of 28 percent of species-specific inquiries, was the species most frequently referenced by hotline callers. Calls about turkey, as expected, dominated the fall and winter seasons. Chicken, ranked second during the fall and winter months, was the top species during the spring and summer. Interest in eggs rose steadily throughout the year. One-fifth of questions received were not related to particular species or food groups.

Figure 4

### Inquiries by Species



## *Diversity of Product Types*

Consumers inquired about a wide range of meat and poultry products. Slightly more than half of all inquiries concerned fresh, unprocessed products; callers frequently showed interest in the products stored uncooked in the home refrigerator (16 percent) or freezer (15 percent). Thirty-one percent of questions received were unrelated to a particular product type.

A small but growing percentage of questions concerned the wide array of ready-prepared foods available from supermarkets, delicatessens, and restaurants. Questions directed to the hotline staff have been the basis of new educational materials developed by FSIS in cooperation with various trade and industry groups.

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## *Calls by State and Time Zone*

Basically unchanged from previous fiscal years is the distribution of calls received by time zone. The majority of calls were initiated in the Eastern time zone (50 percent), followed by the Central (34 percent), Pacific (13 percent), and Mountain (2 percent) time zones.

As in prior years, the hotline received calls from all 50 States, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories, and foreign countries. Again, States whose citizens are action oriented were the heaviest users of the hotline service. In FY 88, more calls came from New York than from any other State; California was second. Illinois, Florida, and Pennsylvania ranked third, fourth, and fifth, respectively.

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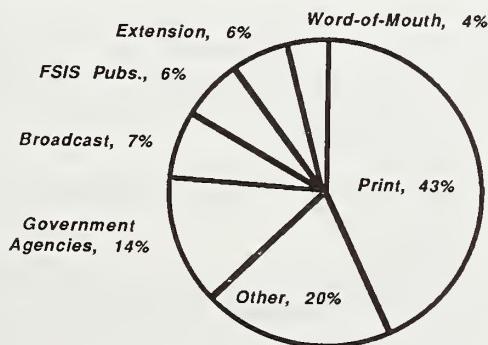
## *Source of the Hotline Number*

Repeat callers accounted for 12 percent of calls to the hotline during FY 88. Forty-three percent of first-time callers learned of the service via the print media (newspapers, magazines, and newsletters). This was a 2-percent increase over FY 87. The percentage of callers learning of the hotline from broadcast media declined from 12 percent in FY 87 to 6 percent last year. (See Fig. 5 for additional information on the sources of the hotline number cited by callers.)

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Figure 5

### Sources of the Hotline Number



## **Meat and Poultry Hotline Outreach Activities**

Several different outreach approaches were undertaken during the year in an effort to keep the Meat and Poultry Hotline telephone number before the American public.

Three public service print ads were extensively used by the media and others to publicize the hotline. One ad, "Grill Our Experts With Your Food Safety Questions," was developed especially for the summer months. The fall/winter season ad asked, "Is This Party Animal Going To Be at Your Holiday Meal?"

"Hotline Calling" question and answer columns appeared as a regular feature in Food News for Consumers magazine and were distributed separately as press releases.

Interviews with radio, television, newspaper, and magazine reporters were an ongoing form of hotline publicity. During the year 56 interviews were given to newspapers, 49 to magazines, 30 to radio, and 14 to television. Hotline staff members appeared seven times on USDA's television show, "A Better Way," which was transmitted across the country via satellite. Staff members also appeared in two video news releases focusing on summertime food safety. The hotline number was promoted during these telecasts.

Newspaper coverage of the hotline introduced 25 percent of the callers to the tollfree number. More than 1,000 different newspapers carried the hotline number during the year. These included such major dailies as:

<i>Akron Beacon Journal</i>	<i>Houston Chronicle</i>
<i>Atlanta Journal and Constitution</i>	<i>Indianapolis Star and News</i>
<i>The Baltimore Sun</i>	<i>Jacksonville Times Union</i>
<i>Bergen County (NJ) Record</i>	<i>The Los Angeles Times</i>
<i>Boston Globe</i>	<i>The Miami Herald</i>
<i>Charlotte (NC) Observer</i>	<i>Minneapolis Star and Tribune</i>
<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	<i>New York Daily News</i>
<i>Chicago Sun Times</i>	<i>The New York Times</i>
<i>Cleveland Plain Dealer</i>	<i>Orlando Sentinel</i>
<i>Daily Oklahoman</i>	<i>Philadelphia Inquirer</i>
<i>Dallas Morning News</i>	<i>Sacramento Bee</i>
<i>Dallas Times Herald</i>	<i>San Diego Tribune</i>
<i>Denver Post Dispatch</i>	<i>San Diego Union</i>
<i>Denver Rocky Mountain News</i>	<i>San Francisco Chronicle</i>
<i>Des Moines Register</i>	<i>San Francisco Examiner</i>
<i>Evansville Courier and Press</i>	<i>St. Louis Post Dispatch</i>
	<i>USA Today</i>
	<i>The Washington Post</i>

Magazine mentions resulted in 10 percent of the hotline calls. Some of the 125 or more magazines that printed the number were:

<i>American Health</i>	<i>Ladies Home Journal</i>
<i>Better Homes and Gardens</i>	<i>McCalls</i>
<i>Bon Appetit</i>	<i>Modern Maturity</i>
<i>Bride's</i>	<i>Parade</i>
<i>Changing Times</i>	<i>Parent's</i>
<i>Consumer Reports</i>	<i>Reader's Digest</i>
<i>Discover</i>	<i>Southern Living</i>
<i>Family Circle</i>	<i>Sunset</i>
<i>Glamour</i>	<i>U.S. News &amp; World Report</i>
<i>Good Food</i>	<i>Vogue</i>
<i>Good Housekeeping</i>	<i>Woman's Day</i>
<i>Gourmet</i>	<i>Working Mother</i>
	<i>Working Woman</i>



**Diane VanLonkhuyzen**

"Based on calls to the hotline, we research new areas of food safety, such as the safety of mail order foods and various nontraditional cooking methods."



**Barbara O'Brien**

"The mission of the hotline home economists is to help consumers make educated food handling decisions. In this way we hope to be an effective force against the rising number of cases of food-borne illness."

Radio and television announcements informed 6 percent of the hotline audience of the number. Newsletters resulted in 2 percent of the calls.

## ***Consumer Education Initiatives***

### ***Continuing Activities***

Hotline home economists not only responded to hotline call but also actively participated in educational outreach activities. The hotline supervisor and senior staff members, in addition to answering media inquiries about the hotline or food safety issues, frequently gave presentations to various groups and associations. In 1988, an overview of FSIS consumer education activities was presented to the American Home Economics Association at the group's annual meeting and exposition in Baltimore. Hotline leaders gave a slide presentation entitled "Safe Shortcuts" at three USDA/FDA Journalists' Conferences. Hotline staff members presented hotline/food safety information and displays at various health fairs, home economics meetings, and dietetics meetings in the Washington metropolitan area.

During the planning of educational campaigns, the hotline represents the consumer perspective to Agency management and public affairs specialists. Throughout the year the hotline staff contributed to issues management committees studying emerging packaging and labeling issues, science-based inspection, and new directions in food safety research. The group played a major role in developing a model of consumer food handling behavior for the Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points study conducted by an Information and Legislative Affairs (ILA) task force. The staff also met with writers of news feature stories to outline typical questions on food safety issues.

### ***Emerging Issues***

Receipt of numerous calls on a particular subject alerts the staff to areas of consumer concern and, perhaps, misunderstanding. Several such topics were identified in 1988, and home economists developed a variety of strategies to inform the public about these issues. Some topics appeared as questions in *Food News for Consumers* "Hotline Calling" columns; others became the focus of a video news release or a segment of "A Better Way" television show.

The trend among consumers toward the use of convenience products and food preparation shortcuts was the focus of the 1987 holiday food safety campaign. This general theme was addressed in numerous outreach projects, stories, and television shows throughout the year.

### ***Mail Order Foods***

Mail order foods warranted a major educational campaign. Calls to the hotline during the 1987 holiday season showed that consumers were concerned about such meat and poultry products. In a number of cases, mail order foods were handled in a manner that made them potentially dangerous to consumers. Often these products were shipped without a coolant and arrived at their destination warm to the touch. Research showed that some companies shipping

these products had misconceptions about their safety, and often erroneously advised consumers that refrigeration was not required due to processing and packaging.

Contact was established with the Direct Marketing Association (DMA). A joint advisory describing safe methods of shipping perishable foods was prepared and mailed to the membership of the DMA. Various divisions within FSIS contributed to this advisory, including the Processed Products Inspection Division, the Standards and Labeling Division, and the Compliance Division. A story on mail order foods was featured in the holiday issue of *Food News for Consumers* and was also issued as a press release. The topic was mentioned by hotline staff in all press interviews related to holiday food safety. A videonews release was distributed to cable stations. A segment of "A Better Way" devoted to mail order foods featured a hotline home economist.

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## **The Food Safety Hotline Pilot**

From June 1 through August 31, home economists staffed not only the Meat and Poultry Hotline but also a pilot Food Safety Hotline. The pilot hotline, a cooperative venture of FSIS and FDA, was available to residents of Massachusetts, Illinois, and Florida from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday. The success of the pilot project demonstrated that such a hotline would be an effective means of disseminating information about the safe handling, storage, and preparation of all foods.

A joint FDA/FSIS task force, convened 5 months prior to inauguration of the pilot hotline, established the publicity plans, training agenda, and evaluation protocol. Together, representatives of the two agencies defined the scope of hotline calls, agreed upon call-handling procedures, and outlined call-referral procedures.

Home economists working on the Meat and Poultry Hotline were chosen to staff the Food Safety Hotline; at times, the home economists were assisted onsite by a consumer affairs officer from FDA. Those chosen to work on the pilot received training from USDA and FDA specialists on a wide range of food safety issues. After completion of the pilot, all staff members were briefed on issues related to foods other than meat and poultry.

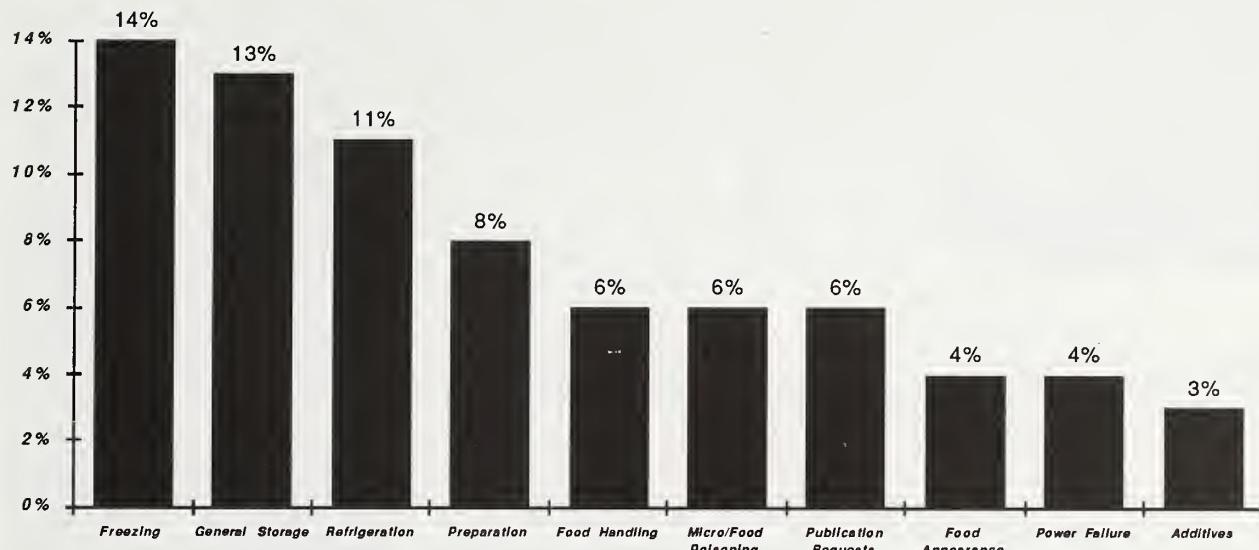
Nearly 7,400 calls were made to the Food Safety Hotline. Almost 4,000 callers spoke with a home economist; 890 called the hotline during operating hours but abandoned the call before being helped; 2,500 called after hours and heard a recorded message. An average of 75 people were personally helped each day; this compares with an average of 60 callers per day during the same period on the Meat and Poultry Hotline. In the 3 months of the pilot, more than 20,000 busy signals were recorded: This represents an additional 5,000 or more persons who attempted to contact the pilot hotline.

Effective training and prior experience enabled staff members to respond immediately to 93 percent of all inquiries received. Consumers were the principal user group. Calls were fairly evenly distributed among the pilot States. Thirty-nine percent of callers were at least 60 years old, while 37 percent were between the ages of 26 and 59.

Most inquiries fell into the general categories of safe handling, storage, and preparation of foods; a few were product complaints. Topics of particular interest to callers included fish and shellfish safety, salmonella contamination of eggs, product recalls, and pesticide use and regulation. Figures 6 and 7 show the subject areas and the types of foods that consumers most asked about when calling the Food Safety Hotline. The subject profile is similar to that of the Meat and Poultry Hotline.

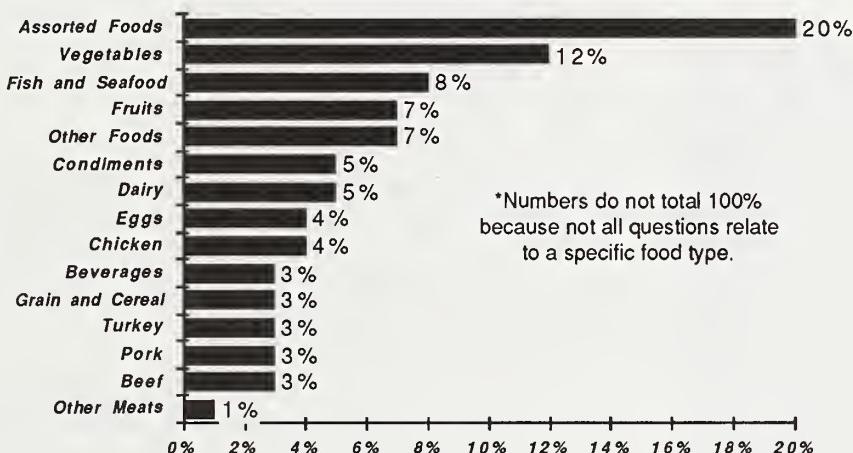
*Figure 6*

### Top Ten Subjects of Food Safety Hotline Calls



*Figure 7*

### Percent of Food Safety Hotline Inquiries by Foods\*



The pilot hotline provided cost-effective consumer education and facilitated timely resolution of actual food-handling problems. Sponsoring agencies gained an understanding of emerging trends in consumer concerns and behaviors. Gaps in consumer knowledge were discerned. Possible future directions in policy development were highlighted. It is estimated that a nationwide service of this type would reach 150,000 callers annually.

### **Meat and Poultry Hotline Operations**

At the close of the fiscal year, the hotline staff included a supervisory home economist; a management analyst; and two full-time, three part-time, and seven intermittent home economists. Improved service to consumers was achieved through attention to three areas: training, call research, and information resources management.



## **Training**

**Karen Tracey**  
"Training is an integral part of the hotline program. We continually develop and initiate inservice training programs in order to provide consumers with accurate and timely information."

Excellence in providing consumers with accurate and timely information is achieved through the development and initiation of inservice training programs. Training was a major emphasis in FY 88. Additional home economists were added to the staff. Veteran home economists completed a comprehensive training program prior to the Food Safety Hotline pilot.

The training program for new hires included videotaped presentations, meetings with program experts, and the compilation of a detailed student manual. Topics covered included general USDA background and specific subject matter knowledge. The program format allowed for flexible scheduling and individualized instruction. The program was successfully used on three occasions to train eight home economists.

Trend analysis of call data revealed current issues of interest to consumers. Such data, along with feedback from staff home economists, was used in FY 88 to set the agenda for additional inservice training. Sessions were presented by hotline staff on various subjects, including safe preparation of foods in microwave ovens, surimi, and computer applications. In addition, the hotline training coordinator arranged sessions with trade association representatives (National Egg Producers; Pork Producers Council), scientists, and specialists within FSIS and USDA. Topics such as import/export inspection, grain inspection, and egg-borne *Salmonella enteritidis* were discussed. Future staff training will focus on emerging food safety issues.



**Bessie Jones Berry**  
"If we are unable to answer a question, we conduct research, find the answer, and call the consumer with the information."

## **Research**

Complex inquiries to hotline home economists have led to a need for extensive research. Of all inquiries to the hotline in FY 88, 500 (2 percent) required research. Information is collected from subject matter specialists in USDA, other Federal agencies, industry, science, health professions, academia, and other associations. After research is completed, the inquirer is called and given the information.

In FY 88, research questions referenced all species and all subject areas. The subjects of inquiries researched ranged from inspection policies to product residue levels to labeling requirements. There were questions about matters that the Agency does not regulate.

During FY 88, data from researched inquiries were collected in the automated data base with greater specificity. The mechanism for handling research that had been developed and implemented on the Meat and Poultry Hotline was adopted for use during the Food Safety Hotline pilot.

## **Information Resources Management**

The hotline staff continued in FY 88 to strive for greater accuracy in data collection. Changes were made in data entry screens to encourage more specificity in the recording of consumer inquiries. Networking of the hotline's computer work stations has contributed to greater speed in processing standard reports and ad hoc queries. The hotline database has been invaluable



Linda Burkholder

"The hotline database has been invaluable in tracking emerging issues, in compiling statistics, and in developing educational materials."

in tracking emerging issues; in compiling statistics for speeches; and in developing news articles, educational campaigns, and staff training materials. More computer workstations were utilized during FY 88.

Future plans include upgrading the database software. Also, new data entry screens will improve the precision of data collection. Long-range plans call for new on-line databases, which will be used to respond promptly to inquiries on food storage and to consolidate information gathered while researching calls. More computer workstations will be brought on-line. Recording of information gathered by call sequencing equipment will be computerized.

### ***Looking to the Future***

Plans are developing to increase the efficiency of the hotline. As operational and computer systems are streamlined, focus will be directed toward increasing call volume and broadening subject matter expertise.

A possible future direction for the expansion of the hotline's scope is the conversion of the Meat and Poultry Hotline to a Food Safety Hotline. Evaluation of the results from last summer's pilot program will affect the decision on expanding the service.

Analysis of FY 88 call volume statistics has also indicated that further expansion of operating hours during the month of November would be feasible. Three additional days were added to the schedule for FY 89: Saturday and Sunday, November 19-20, 1988; and Thanksgiving Day, 1988.

### ***Conclusion***

The Meat and Poultry Hotline continues to be a cost-effective means of preventing food-borne illness. Many situations described by callers present a clear risk of illness. The cost in dollars from millions of suspected cases of food-borne illness could be as high as \$10 billion annually. This includes medical expenses, lost wages, lost productivity, and various costs to the food industry.

Each call to the Meat and Poultry Hotline benefits an individual caller; in turn, food handling advice benefits other members of the caller's household. If the caller is a media representative, he/she will inform thousands of consumers about the importance of handling food safely. Furthermore, the overall effect is cumulative; potential cases of food-borne illness are prevented each time that advice is heeded.

Other advantages of the tollfree hotline are well documented. It serves as an early warning system, allowing government agencies to take swift remedial action when problems are detected in the marketplace. The hotline is an easily accessible channel for objective, balanced, and accurate information, and sometimes reassurance. Still another benefit of the hotline is the opportunity to collect valuable information about consumer beliefs and behaviors.

In the coming months and years, the Meat and Poultry Hotline will continue to provide immediate answers to consumer questions while working to prevent future cases of food-borne illness.

## **Meat and Poultry Hotline Staff**

### ***Bessie Jones Berry***

Bessie Jones Berry, home economist, has been with the Meat and Poultry Hotline since June 1986. In addition to answering calls, she is the hotline research and product complaint manager. She has a B.S. degree in home economics from the University of Maryland, and a master's degree in consumer affairs from Howard University in Washington, D.C., that included an internship in the White House Office of Consumer Affairs. She has taught foods and nutrition courses in the public schools. Ms. Berry is originally from Guthrie, OK.

### ***Linda Burkholder***

Linda Burkholder is the Meat and Poultry Hotline management analyst and database manager. In this capacity she is responsible for analyzing calls that come into the hotline to identify trends and to determine new areas needing consumer education. Ms. Burkholder started with the hotline in 1987 answering consumer calls. She has 6 years experience as a home economics teacher in public schools and has taught food preparation courses at the college level. She received a degree in home economics education from James Madison University in Virginia and a master's degree in nutrition education and human services from Hood College in Frederick, MD.

### ***Marianne Gravely***

Marianne Gravely, home economist, has a bachelor of science degree in home economics with an emphasis in foods and nutrition from Hood College in Frederick, MD. She has worked as a public health nutritionist and supervised a Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program in Virginia. Previously, she was a home economist for the Yokosuka Naval Base in Japan. She is currently working on a master's degree in nutrition from Virginia Tech in Blacksburg.

### ***Gertie Hurley***

Gertie Hurley, home economist, brings a variety of experiences to her position on the hotline. A native of Alabama, she holds a B.S. degree in community service education with an emphasis on nutrition from Howard University in Washington, D.C., and a MBA from Loyola College in Baltimore, MD. Ms. Hurley has over 12 years professional experience which includes positions as an extension agent, consumer affairs intern for a major food chain, and director of home health care service and training programs.

### ***Marilyn Johnston***

Marilyn Johnston, home economist, received a B.S. degree in home economics from Purdue University in Indiana and worked as a home economist for several public utilities in that State before moving to the Washington, D.C., area. She has extensive knowledge of microwave cooking, having taught classes for the past 11 years. In addition to answering calls, she is working on publishing a cookbook.

### ***Patricia Moriarty***

Patricia Moriarty has been a home economist on the hotline since July 1988. She has extensive experience in community nutrition education and health promotion programs. She previously worked for the National High Blood Pressure Education Program and was with the Greater Cincinnati Nutrition Council for 9 years. Ms. Moriarty has a B.S. in nutrition from Notre Dame College in Cleveland, Ohio, and an M.Ed. from the University of Cincinnati. She is also a registered dietitian. Ms. Moriarty is active with the American Dietetic Association as a volunteer for marketing, public relations, and media communications programs.

### ***Marilyn Mower***

Marilyn Mower, home economist, has been answering consumer calls on the Meat and Poultry Hotline since 1986. She has a variety of experience, including serving as director of test kitchens for a public relations firm and assistant food editor at Parents magazine. In addition to working on the hotline, she is also director of the dietetics program at Hood College in Frederick, MD. Her education background includes a B.S. degree in foods and nutrition from Syracuse University. Ms. Mower was born and raised in New York.

***Barbara O'Brien***

Barbara O'Brien received a B. S. degree in home economics from Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College in Indiana and completed her dietetic internship at Walter Reed General Hospital in Washington, D.C. A registered, licensed dietitian, her experience has been in hospitals and nursing homes. In addition to working on the hotline, Ms. O'Brien is involved in the production of nutrition education videos for Montgomery County (MD.) Community Television.

***Jane Reinsel***

Jane Reinsel, home economist, received a B.S. degree in human nutrition and foods from Virginia Tech and has taught cooking classes across the South for 3 years before returning to the Washington, D.C., area. Ms. Reinsel has appeared on radio and television shows conducting food demonstrations and answering consumers' food questions. In addition to answering hotline calls, she writes articles and develops recipes for magazines and cookbooks.

***Susan Templin***

Susan Templin, as supervisor of the Meat and Poultry Hotline, is responsible for the activities of 12 full-time and on-call home economists who answer phones, and a management analyst. She serves as media spokesperson for the Meat and Poultry Hotline, featured on radio and television programs, and is often quoted in newspaper and magazine articles. She also writes for the FSIS magazine Food News for Consumers. Prior to joining the hotline in 1985 as a home economist, she was director of sales for a food company. She also has 10 years of experience in retail store management and has supervised a USDA-sponsored day care nutrition program. Ms. Templin, who has a degree in home economics from the University of Maryland, has also conducted cooking and microwave-use classes.

***Karen Tracey***

Karen Tracey serves as the hotline training manager working on the design and development of training materials for hotline staff, in addition to answering calls on the hotline. She has been with the hotline since 1986, when she moved to Washington, D.C., after having been a secondary home economics teacher in Kansas for 8 years. She has a B.S. degree in vocational home economics education from Central Missouri State University. She has worked for the city of Independence (MO.) Youth Employment/Life Skills Program. Ms. Tracey is currently pursuing a master's degree.

***Diane VanLonkhuyzen***

Diane VanLonkhuyzen, home economist, has a varied background in the field of home economics which includes a position as consumer advisor to a major utility company in the Washington, D.C., area. For 9 years she ran a test kitchen developing recipes for the company's cookbook, and conducting cooking and energy conservation demonstrations in the community. Ms. VanLonkhuyzen has also served as a consultant to numerous appliance manufacturers. She has been with the hotline since September 1986, and has a B.S. degree in home economics from the University of Maryland.

***CiCi Williamson***

CiCi Williamson, home economist, brings expertise in the field of microwave cooking to the hotline. In addition to answering consumer calls, she is a syndicated microwave cooking columnist and author of three microwave cookbooks. Her articles have appeared in professional microwave journals and women's magazines. Ms. Williamson is president-elect of the Washington, D.C., area Home Economists in Business. She holds a B.S. degree in home economics from the University of Maryland and is a certified home economist.





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